



635
6
y 1

REALIZATION

By Serial
10756
Jackson Prison

A Plea from the Men
Inside for the
Soldiers at the Front

Price
35
Cents

...1917...

M.S.P.
Dramatic
Club

MAR 11 1918

© GLD 49745

PS635
Z9 TR86

Dedication:

DEDICATED TO

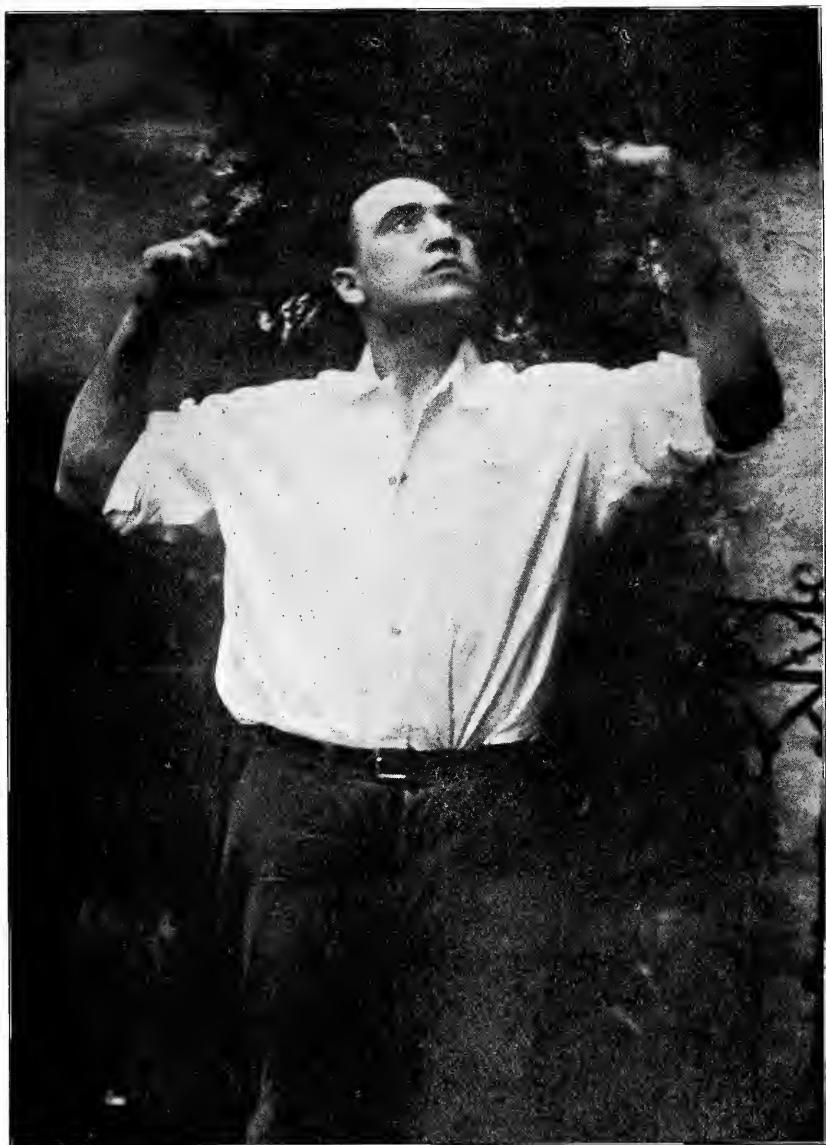
The American Soldiers

who are eager and willing to give their lives,
if need be, so the folks back home may
not be forever overshadowed with
the possibilities of a tyran-
nical Prussianism.

—The Author.

One-Half the Proceeds

from the sale of this book to
be devoted to the establishing
of a COMFORT FUND for the
American Soldiers Over There



ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

"John Steel, this is to be your lesson. Pray God it
may be her's!" (*Page 12*)

A Plea to Society at large for The American Soldier

FROM the innumerable, who through wrong perspectives in the course of human events, have fallen by the wayside, and, after having fallen, been cast into an abiding place of silent meditation and thought, we, *The DRAMATIC CLUB, of JACKSON PRISON*, do, in this little booklet, try to bring to you a glimpse of our true understanding of some of the deeper phases of life, and a revelation of many John Steels in our midst whose hearts of pure gold are now covered by a felon's suit of gray

REALIZATION

(TIME: PRESENT. PLACE: NEW YORK CITY)

A Living, Breathing, Social Drama of Present Day American Life. Written by an Inmate, Staged by Inmates, Directed by Inmates, Acted by Inmates of The Michigan State Prison, Jackson, Mich.

CAST:

JOHN STEEL—A promising young civil engineer, holding the position of Chief Engineer with The Morgan Engineering Co., New York City.

NELL STEEL—Social, ambitious wife of John Steel, who is eagerly trying to break into the New York Four Hundred.

ROBERT HENSHAW—Wealthy old bachelor uncle of John Steel.

JAMES C. MORGAN—President of the Morgan Engineering Company.

D. A. RITTMAN—District Attorney, New York County, N.Y.

JACK MONTGOMERY—Senior member of the firm, Montgomery & Paige, brokers, Wall street, New York City.

MARIE—{ Maid in the Steel home.

"BUB"—Office boy in the offices of the Morgan Engineering Company.

THOMAS—Cashier of the Morgan Engineering Co.

OFICER—Detective from police headquarters, N. Y. City.

BELL BOY—Bell boy National Hotel, Akatoon, Iowa.

Act I.

Sitting room in the Steel apartment, Riverside Drive, New York City.

Upon the arising of the curtain Steel is sitting at center table looking over a bill from his wife's gown maker.

After looking over same for few seconds (leans back in chair) and soliloquizes:

STEEL—"Only twenty-four hundred this time—four gowns at six hundred per. What can Nell be thinking of anyway? This society game must be getting her better judgment; since she's gotten this social craze in her head she's lost all conception of the value of a dollar; just goes ahead and spends, never stopping for a moment to consider where I am to get the where-with-all to pay her bills. She must be under the impression that my income is eighty thousand a year instead of eight. Well, there must be a definite understanding. I must try and bring her back to her better self."

(Enter NELL) just having returned from an afternoon of bridge at the home of Jane Calder, the wife of a prominent New York promoter.

Having lost sixty dollars in the afternoon's play she starts a rapid-fire conversation, not wanting Steel to know of her loss until she sees the mood displayed.

NELL—[Walks to Steel and kisses him], saying: "Hello, dearie; I just came from Jane Calder's" [she walks around table and sits down in chair opposite Steel, removes hat and gloves, lays them on table, talking all the while.] We had a few hands of bridge, I had the darndest luck imaginable, but I only lost sixty."

STEEL—[Scowling] "Only sixty; mere trifle; you can go out on the Drive and pick sixty dollars from the trees at any hour in the day I suppose?"

NELL—[Paying no attention to this last remark] "Well (unconcerned), I suppose my luck will change one of these days."

STEEL—"Yes, it's going to change pretty damn soon, Nell."

NELL—"What did you say?"

STEEL—"Nothing, nothing; I was only thinking aloud."

NELL—"Say, John, Bert Ransome bought Bess the duckiest Fiat Roadster last week. She drove me home in it this afternoon. You know he made a great lot of money in that co-operative hardware deal he promoted. He always gives Bess some

kind of a handsome present whenever he makes one of his 'clean-ups', as he calls them. I do wish, John, you would get in some business like that so perhaps we could have a few of these small pleasures our friends enjoy."

STEEL—[Picks up bill from table and studies it] "So you could ride around in Fiat Roadsters bought with money gained on the sorrows and tears of the small dealers whom I had forced to sell out to me as Bert Ransome and his crowd have done in this latest clean-up of theirs?"

NELL—[Sees him looking at bill] "Oh yes, John, I meant to give you that bill this morning so you could send Madam a check right away. I hate to make her wait even a day, as she is such a dear with me, never disappoints; and, as every one remarks, fits me so exact."

STEEL—"I'm afraid if you keep this pace up much longer Madam will have to wait a good many days for a check. (Awaiting no comment.) Where is this twenty-four hundred coming from, Nell? (He leans both arms on table, watching her eagerly.) Do you realize that I will be compelled to borrow this money to enable me to pay this bill for the satisfaction of your vanity and popperty? (Awaiting no reply.) When we gave up our little home on Long Island to come here to live we both agreed to be conservative in money matters and continue as we did when out there to lay something away for a rainy day. Now, if it rains, I'm afraid neither of us will have enough to buy an umbrella. You have not only spent the few thousand we had in the rainy day fund, but have also put me in debt three or four thousand."

NELL—"What do you expect me to do—live and dress like a pauper?"

STEEL—"No, but I did expect you to at least honor our mutual declaration of conservatism to the extent of living and spending in proportion to our means. But instead, you have rushed madly and blindly into this social game of glitter and mockery; you have taken unto yourself its tangos, cigarette smoking, wine drinking, card playing, unwomanly principles, along with creating the one ambition in your heart of becoming one of the New York Four Hundred. (He leans over table, arising from chair, places both hands on her shoulders, pleads with her.) You're soaring on a cloud of illusion, Nell, that is bound to burst and

drop you into a chasm of utter despair. Give it up, dear. Come back to earth and the true things in life. You owe it to yourself, you owe it to me."

NELL—[Shaking his hands from her shoulders and pouting] "There you go again, harping on the same old topic—money. I get beastly tired of it, morning, noon and night. You don't care to see me look half-way decent. I suppose you would like to have me buy my clothes at Binell's or the 15th street store and chase bargain sales and the like? Well, let me tell you, John Steel, I don't intend coming down to the level of a shop girl just for the sake of saving a few paltry dollars that will never be missed."

STEEL—[Walking around table and looking down at her] "You talk like a child, Nell. You know if I could afford it I would buy every style shop in Paris for you. God knows I want you to have the best my income will permit; but come, now, be reasonable, wouldn't a two hundred dollar gown have answered the same purpose as a six hundred dollar one? Come, dear, promise me you'll give up these lately acquired false notions of happiness of yours. I can't afford it, girlie. Won't you listen; won't you understand?"

NELL—[Shrugs her shoulders, takes cigarette from little gold cigarette case at bosom and lights it] "You are always crying 'Can't afford it.' Why don't you divorce yourself from your profession long enough to make a pile in another line the way some of our friends do? You are just as bright, just as talented, just as capable as they are. After you have made it, go back to the only thing you love on earth, your profession." (She blows a cloud of smoke to the ceiling.)

STEEL—[Walks to end of room, head bent, thinking; he runs his hand through hair; he turns, raises his head and walks back to her, sits down on edge of table, half turned to her] "You speak of making a pile in another line the way some of our friends do. First, I want to state these people are no friends of mine. A pickpocket won't steal a friend's pocketbook (he casts his eyes to the floor); it's against their moral code. But these people, whom you choose to term my friends, have stolen something far more precious to me than mere dollars. They have stolen you (he turns his eyes upon her and leans toward her); the you that used to be you, and have left me a you I can't understand in return, and yet you would have me become as they are—men devoid of all principle, men utterly lacking in feeling for their fellow men, men who would trample and kick and tear apart their own brother if he were down and struggling to arise, if the point at issue were the attainment of the mighty God, Mammon." (He arises from table and walks to chair at end of table and sits down.)

NELL—"All piffle; you always were too honest for your own good and you know it."

STEEL—[Leans forward in chair] "Honest, eh? If so, I'm proud of the fact. One thing is certain, when I lie down at night no visions arise before my eyes wherein I see mothers and fathers and little children with arms extended, begging me for the bread I took from their mouths by some gold-gleaming, silver-tongued, worthless promotion scheme. This is something these so-called friends of yours cannot truthfully say."

NELL—[Taking and lighting another cigarette] "You should have been a Socialist, John, they certainly would have nominated you for President."

STEEL—"Socialist, or whatever I should have been, I know whereof I speak when I say it is men of your friends' caliber who are making this country of ours the most corrupt nation on God's earth, with their buying of legislation, their bribing of judges and states attorneys (he arises from chair, becoming greatly excited); I tell you, Nell, it's these men and their kind who are making us the scorn of the world and making it even hard for an honest man to live honest any more. I have had them come to me with their dirty propositions, requesting me to specify their steel or their cement in my plans. Of course I was to be taken care of. I tell you I know how petty and low they are from actual personal experience."

NELL—[Arising from chair and starting to leave the room] "I'll not sit here and listen to you speak of my friends that way."

STEEL—[Intercepting her] "The truth hurts, eh? You're going back there and sit down (he points to chair very commandingly.) I'm painting these friends of yours as they really and truly are, with no shading or retouching. I have only half finished. I insist upon you staying until I have finished the canvas."

NELL—"I'll not stay another minute." (She tries to walk past him; he blocks her way.)

STEEL—"You are going back to that chair (he puts his face close to her's, looks in her eyes) until I have finished what I have to say. Go! (he points to chair she has just left. (A frightened look comes to her eyes, she backs into chair and sits down; he sits down on edge of table facing her.) To resume, it's these men and their kind who are driving poor shop girls to a life of shame and prostitution by their lying promises of much gold in exchange for these poor girls' virtue. They have no respect for marriage vows, their own or anyone else's; they'd just as soon steal another man's wife as they would his money by their watered promotion schemes. It's them and their kind, through their dirty thieving get-rich-quick schemes, who are driving clerks and book-keepers and underpaid employees to steal from their firms so as to enable them to invest in their propositions, finally landing the poor fellows in the penitentiary, while they go their unmolested, unrighteous way. These are some of the actions of your so-called friends; these are some of the sources of some of your friends' diamonds and automobiles, and five thousand dollar fur coats and the like; these are some of the principles upon which some of your elite are built and supported, and for which you are sacrificing your better self to become a part. These are their lines, Nell; I think I'll stick to mine. The canvas is completed. I trust you will view it, Nell, from all its angles and think, and think deep, before you are a day older.

NELL—[She arises and starts for the door, saying] "John, you certainly are an idealist. I am afraid you never will be a millionaire." (She exits.) (He leaves table and drops in chair in front of grate fire at side of room, gazes in fire, saying):

STEEL—"Our friends! her friends! Oh, where is my Nell of yesterday whom you have stolen from me? (Looking in fire, stretches out his arms to an imaginary object, saying): Nell! my Nell! oh come, come back to me!"

[Curtain descends very slowly.]

Act II.

SCENE ONE

Next Day. Steel's Private Office, Morgan Engineering Co., Broadway, New York City.

In connection by door with Steel's office is the firm's private vault wherein is deposited plans and specifications of past jobs constructed by the firm. This connection is so as to enable Steel easy access to same, to refer to old plans and specifications in new work.

At the present time the firm has deposited in the vault seventy-five thousand dollars in negotiable securities, which are to be used as a time guarantee on some bridge job the firm is about to construct.

[Steel is seated at desk going over some plans.]

[Telephone on desk rings, he answers.]

STEEL—"Hello!" — pause. "Yes; him talking."

——Pause——

" "Oh! Hello Jack, how are you?"

——Pause——

" "I'm fine, thanks."

——Pause——

" "Nell? She's well, thanks."

——Pause——

" "You say you want to let me in on something good?"

——Pause——

" "I will need about twenty thousand, you say?"

——Pause——

" "[Laughing] "Why, I haven't a thousand to my name, old man."

——Pause——

" "You'll come over and explain?"

——Pause——

" "Sure, come; I don't think it will do much good though."

——Pause——

" "Well, come over anyway."

——Pause——

" "All right, old man, I'll expect you. Good-by."

[Hangs up receiver, sits back in chair in deep study] soliloquizes:

STEEL—"It's mighty good of Jack to think of me, but how the devil am I going into a proposition requiring twenty thousand? It would be nice if I could pick up a few extra thousand now and then. Perhaps this would enable me to let Nell go the limit in this social depravity of hers. Perhaps after she had gone the limit for awhile she would come to realize how false and narrow the game is and, upon realizing, come back to her real self once more." (Knock at door.)

STEEL—"Come!" [Enter Bub, the office boy, with card of Jack Montgomery's.]

BUB—"Dere's a gentleman out dere to see yer, Mr. Steel." (Hands Steel card.)

STEEL—[Reads card.] "Show the gentleman in, Bub."

BUB—"Yes, sir." (Bub exits. Returns to door directly and announces): "Mr. Jack Montgomery!" (Enter Montgomery; Bub closes door upon Montgomery's entry.)

STEEL—[Arises from chair, shakes Montgomery's extended hand] saying: "How are you, Jack? I'm glad to see you. Have a chair." (He offers chair standing along side of desk.)

MONT.—[Sitting down] "I'm tip-top, John; and you and Nell?"

STEEL—"We're both fine, thanks." (Steel opens desk drawer, taking out box of cigars. Hands box to Montgomery.)

STEEL—"Have a cigar?" (Both take cigars and light them.)

MONT.—[Glancing at desk] upon which a blueprint is spread. — "I see you are still hard at it, old boy. Don't you ever take a day off? You are without a doubt the most devoted man to your profession I ever knew."

STEEL—"I guess I am devoted to it, Jack. Next to Nell I guess it's the dearest thing in life to me. You know, Jack, it's a wonderful thing, this building game—the perfection of your ideas into reality is just like bringing up a child; but of course I can't expect one not of the profession to see it from my viewpoint."

MONT.—"Of course not."

STEEL—"You see it's this way, Jack: first, along comes some Trust Company or other corporation, whose board of directors have voted a new home. After the plans have been drawn, requests are sent out for bids; your firm receives one of the requests. You being engineer-in-chief, you are notified of the fact, with instructions to go to it. This means your firm is in the running; it's up to you to do the landing. You start at once formulating your plans in here (he taps his forehead) until you can see the minutest detail in your mind's eye. After this has been accomplished; after the strength of every necessary bolt, every beam, every girder has been figured, with the cost of each item plus the amount of labor required to carry out the work, your net result is transferred to paper in the form of plans and specifications. These are then submitted to your client with your firm's figures for doing the job. If your figure is lower than the other fellow's, you win; if not, all your brain-racking for nothing. After the contract is signed, the time guarantee posted, you are ready for the real fight. First, your survey is run, then comes the excavating of the site. This completed, the foundation is laid, then from this step on your child is raised to full maturity. Then some fine morning you come down to the job and there, where a few months ago stood an old frame structure or vacant lot, now stands a wonderful gigantic building, wherein shortly will be housed the business of thousands of your fellow men. (He becomes greatly excited, gesticulating to an imaginary building.) You stand awe-stricken. Can you imagine or realize the feeling that comes over you?—the gripping of the heart-strings, the exultation and glory when you see standing before you the work of your hand and brain in all its beauty, in all its strength personified. This is what holds me, Jack; this is what I am devoted to. Do you blame me?"

MONT.—"God! John, with your intensity of purpose, what a hit you'd make in the Street. The financial world is calling for men like you, and this little proposition of mine is going to be the entering wedge if you'll come."

STEEL—"I wouldn't give up my profession for all the money in Wall Street and the Bank of England combined, Jack."

MONT.—[Lighting his cigar, which has gone out, and handing Steel the lit match] "It won't do no harm to explain?"

STEEL—"No, of course not, old man." (Steel lights cigar.)

MONT.—"A crowd of us little fellows in the

Street have been quietly buying for the past eighteen months all the Tin Plate Amalgamated stock we could get our hands on. We have just one of the big fellows with us, he being the pivot upon which the whole little scheme revolves. Some time ago he and the other big chaps had a tiff that day by day became deeper and deeper. One of our crowd heard of it, went to him and explained our proposition, using for his strongest argument, if he would come in with us, the chance it would afford him of putting one over on his enemies. He saw the point and agreed to come in. He holds a big block of Amalgamated preferred. With this block of stock and the Amalgamated president's block, whom he has influenced to come in, and with what stock we fellows have quietly bought up, we now have in our control forty-nine per cent of all the capital and surplus stock of the company. We need forty thousand dollars to obtain the other two per cent that will give us fifty-one per cent and control. We have twenty of the forty thousand promised, so we really only need twenty thousand more. Every one of us have got our all sunk in this proposition; none of us can command another dollar. If we can raise this other twenty thousand and obtain control, the morning after control is secured our brokers on the floor will be instructed to offer ninety for any part or all of ten thousand shares of Amalgamated Tin preferred. This will create the demand; our brokers will keep bidding it up until it reaches 140 or 150. During the excitement a set of brokers we will have in reserve will receive instructions to unload. Well, you know the answer, John—the lambs pay us."

STEEL—[Greatly excited] "Yes! yes! Go on, Jack!"

MONT.—"Well, you know they say it takes a ton of gold to make a million. If we don't have thirty or forty ton when the show is over, I miss my guess. And, John, do you know what that twenty thousand invested will mean?"

STEEL—"Not the least idea."

MONT.—[He takes paper and pencil from desk and figures] "About, let me see (pause), \$200,000 clear."

STEEL—[In amazement] "More than I will make here in the next twenty years."

MONT.—"Yes [he slaps Steel on the knee], but I want you to get that twenty thousand and come in with us, John."

STEEL—"Me! [surprised] Why, I haven't got two thousand, old man, not alone twenty."

MONT.—"If I were you I should certainly take advantage of this opportunity, John; a like one may never come again in your lifetime. Certainly your uncle, Bob Henshaw, would loan you the money for a few days. You at least ought to try, old man; you owe it to yourself, you owe it to Nell."

STEEL—"You say it will only take a few days to put everything through?"

MONT.—"If we could get the needed twenty thousand today, everything will be over by Friday at the very latest."

STEEL—[Thinking for a moment] "Hold this open until four this afternoon, will you, Jack? By God! I'm going to try to raise that twenty thousand."

MONT.—[Arising from chair] "I'll wait at the office until four-thirty this afternoon. Let me know one way or the other by then. Are you and Nell going to the Calder affair tonight?"

STEEL—"I guess so."

MONT.—"I have to run up to Budd's to get a new evening vest; mine are all soiled, and my man forgot to send them to the laundry."

STEEL—"Who are you taking, Jack?"

MONT.—"Little lonesome, Jack. I'm staggering it. (He walks toward door, Steel arises from chair and follows. At door they stop and shake hands.) Until four-thirty then, and good luck to your trying."

STEEL—[Opening door] "Probably before, if I am successful; I'll get busy right away."

MONT.—"All right, old man. Good-by." (He exits.)

STEEL—"Good-by. (He walks back to desk and sits down, lays cigar stump in ash receiver on desk, sits back in chair and soliloquizes): Well, here's the chance to make some money outside of my line as Nell suggested, and the beauty of it is, the way of making it is not Nells friends' way. Anyone who loses in this proposition will be well able to afford it. I guess this Wall street game is all a case of dog eat dog at its best.

"Let me see; Uncle Bob has often told me if I ever needed any assistance to let him know, as he was greatly indebted to father. I'll give him a try." (Picks up receiver from telephone on desk.)

STEEL—"7765 Riverside, Please.

....Pause....

"Hello; Mr. Henshaw's residence?

....Pause....

"Is he in?

....Pause....

"Hello, Uncle Bob!

....Pause....

"John talking; how are you?

....Pause....

"That's good; we're just fine.

....Pause....

"I would like to borrow some money for a few days.

....Pause....

"About twenty thousand. You see, a friend of mine down in Wall street is letting me in on a sure thing he is going to put over in a day or so, and—(pause)—What's that you say?

....Pause....

"That settles it! You can't let me have it?

....Pause....

"You are against any Wall street manipulations?

....Pause....

"Oh, all right; I'll not trouble you further. Good-by sir."

[Throws receiver to hook with a bang.]

STEEL—"I never thought uncle Bob would turn me down. The end of my dream, I suppose. (He starts to fumble drawings on desk.) Well, this is not getting out these specifications very fast. (He starts going over drawings on desk with tri-square; stops for a second.) Let me see; what kind of a truss can we use here? I'll go look it up. (He arises from chair and walks into vault; he can be seen in vault through open door looking at some bundles of papers. He comes from vault,

goes to push button on wall along side of desk and pushes it. Bub, the office boy enters immediately.)

STEEL—"Go ask Mr. Thomas what those securities in the vault are to be used for, Bub."

BUB—[Eyeing cigar stump on Steel's desk.] "Very well, sir. (He tries to take cigar stump from desk on going out, but Steel turns his head too soon. Bub exits.)

STEEL—[Sitting down at desk] "A chance of a lifetime gone because I lack twenty thousand dollars. [Enter Bub.]

BUB—"He says dat dose securities are ter be used for de cash guarantee on dat western bridge job and dat dey are due dis coming Monday, and dat dere's \$75,000 dere.

STEEL—"All right, Bub, thanks. (He sits staring at desk.)

BUB—(Standing at back of Steel, points to cigar stump then to himself), saying under his breath: "Yer mine, yer mine!" (Steel turns his head, Bub starts for door; Steel starts to examine drawing on desk. At door Bub turns, looks at Steel, turns, closes door, sneaks along wall in direction of vault; enters vault.)

STEEL—[Arises from chair, walks to vault; at vault door stops, turns half way to audience, runs hand through hair] saying: "Seventy-five thousand and (pause; stares at floor); returns are bound to come in three days (pause). Why, I could take them and put them back by Friday (pause). They're not due until Monday (pause.) By God! I'll (pause), I'll do it! (He starts to enter vault, stops, turns to front of stage, hisses to himself): Stealing! Thief! (pause; runs hand through hair, laughs. Why no, it can't be that, just to borrow them for a day or two (he runs to outer door and locks it, stands gazing about the office, starts back to vault, at vault stops.) Here I am, day after day, slaving for Morgan, making him rich, while I on the other hand must browbeat my wife about the costly clothes she wears. I'm getting mighty damned tired of it. Here's my chance; by God! I'm going to take it! (He enters vault, comes out immediately, greatly excited, stuffing securities in inside coat pocket.)

BUB—(Bub runs from vault, Steel turns quickly, reaching for paper-weight on desk, he sees Bub and drops weight. Bub grabs Steel's hands.) "I seen yer, Mr. Steel, but I didn't mean ter, honest I didn't. I went in dere ter hide until I got de chance ter take de cigar snipe off yer desk. I seen yer take de securities, Mr. Steel; for Gawd sake go put dem back. Me fader was a tief, Mr. Steel, and dey sent him up de river fer five years. I fought me mudder would die at foist, but she lived troo it; den my fader came out. De Governor pardoned him because he was goin' ter die. He was a great big guy wen he went away, but wen he came back he was t'in and he coughed all de time. Den one day I came home from selling me poipers and me mudder was crying, and in de front room candles was boining at de feet of me fader who was all covered wid a sheet; and Fader Ryan was dere, and he took me on his knee and told me dat I must always be a good boy and take good care of me mudder because me fader had went ter Gawd. Mudder told me after de funeral dat it was de consumphun dat killed me fader, dat he got when he was up de river.

"Put dem back, Mr. Steel; I wouldn't squeal on yer, because yer a sport, and yer give me quarters, but dey'll ketch ya and dey'll send yer

up de river, and den you'll come out and go ter Gawd.

STEEL—[Patting Bub on the head, pulls half a dollar from pocket and gives it to him.] "You're a brick, son; go buy some ice cream. I'll put them back. You go now; I have some work to do.

BUB—"All right, Mr. Steel; t'anks fer de half. I knew yer didn't want ter go ter Gawd yet. (He exits.)

STEEL—"He will think I put them back. [Picks up receiver from telephone on desk] saying: "For Nell's sake I must!"

STEEL—"Hello! (becoming excited again) Main 426.

...Pause...

" "Hello! Montgomery & Paige?

...Pause...

" "Hello! You, Jack?

...Pause...

" "John talking?

...Pause...

" "Yes, will come in (he casts eyes about office) for the whole twenty thousand.

...Pause...

" "Yes; will be right over. Wait for me.

...Pause...

" [Walks to coat rack, takes hat from same, puts it on, looks once more about office. Exits.)

BUB—[Bub enters.] "Mr. Steel! Mr. Steel! (looks about office; looks in vault. Spies cigar stump on desk, smiles, walks to desk, takes paper bag from pocket, snatches stump from desk, puts it in bag) saying: "Yer mine (looking in bag), yer mine for keeps!"

[Curtain.]

ACT II.—SCENE TWO

Dining room in the Steels' apartment, Riverside Drive, New York City.

The table is laid for dinner. Marie, the maid, has just placed the bread on the table.

[Steel enters.]

STEEL—"Good evening, Marie. (Walks to table and stops.)

MARIE—"Good evening, sir.

STEEL—"Is dinner ready? I'm as hungry as a bear.

MARIE—"All ready, sir.

STEEL—[Sitting down in chair at table.] "Tell Mrs. Steel dinner is to be served, Marie.

MARIE—"She is not at home, sir.

STEEL—"Where is she, do you know?

MARIE—"This is the afternoon of her box party, and she has not returned yet, sir.

STEEL—[Glancing at his watch.] "Her afternoons are awful long here of late. I'll bet she's gadding about at Delmonico's or Sherry's with her guests, piling more debts on my shoulders I suppose. You may serve dinner, Marie; we will not wait for her.

MARIE—"Will you have some consomme, sir?

STEEL—"You had better make it chloroform for all the pleasure I am getting out of life here of late. (Enter Nell. Marie exits.)

NELL—[Nell walks to Steel, kisses him] saying: "Hello, honey; we just left Martin's, late again for dinner. Now don't scold. (She shakes her



ACT FOUR

"You know, dear heart, it's a long road that has no turning!"

(Page 16)

finger at him mockingly, walks to other side of table, pulls up chair to place at table laid for her and sits down, removes hat and gloves, laying them on chair, talking all the while.) You know this was the afternoon of my box party. I gave the affair in honor of Nance Werner, Jane Calder's guest. The Calders are always so nice to us; never give an affair of any importance unless we are invited. Everybody has been entertaining for her. I felt duty bound to Jane to do something, so I finally decided on the box and tea party, as I knew this would be the least expensive. The whole affair—box, candies and tea, only cost a hundred and twenty dollars. I knew you wouldn't care, now do you?

STEEL—"What good would it do if I did? It's over now. (Enter Marie with two plates of congee on a tray; serves one to Steel, one to Nell.)

NELL—"I don't care for a thing, Marie; we had tea not over an hour ago. (Door-bell rings, Marie lays tray on serving table at side of room and goes to answer bell.)

STEEL—"I wonder who that can be? (Enter Marie.)

MARIE—"A boy to see you, sir; says he's Bub from the office.

STEEL—[A look of alarm on his face] "Show him in, Marie. (Marie exits.)

STEEL—[To himself] "The securities! (He looks about room for avenue of escape, seemingly very nervous.)

NELL—"What is it, John? Are you ill?

STEEL—[Bracing himself up; puts hand to his head] "No, I have a severe headache, that's all. (Marie enters with Bub, Marie walks to serving table and removes tray, exits with tray. Bub watches her until she passes through door.)

STEEL—"Hello, son. (Anxious and still nervous.)

BUB—"Hello, Mr. Steel. (Pulls note from pocket and hands same to Steel.) Here's a kite de boss sent yer.

STEEL—[Opening note and reading it.] "This is Mrs. Steel, Bub.

BUB—[Bub bows and shakes Nell's hand] saying: "I'm very glad to know yer, Mrs. Steel."

NELL—"And I'm very glad to know you, Bub. Won't you have some dinner with us?"

BUB—"Why, I had me dinner dis noon, t'anks."

STEEL—[Laughing.] "No, no, son, Mrs. Steel means supper. (Nell laughs.)

BUB—"Naw, I can't; yer see I have supper every night wid me best goil."

STEEL—[Laughing.] "And who is your best girl?"

BUB—"Me mudder, of course—de best goil in de wold."

STEEL—"That's right son. You stick to mother."

BUB—"Say, honest, Mr. Steel, de American Glue Company ain't got notting on me when it comes ter sticking ter mudder."

STEEL—"Have a chair, Bub, and I'll have Marie bring you a piece of pie. I know you like pie."

BUB—[Pulling up a chair to the table and sitting down.] "Pie's me middle name, Mr. Steel. (Steel rings for Marie. Marie enters. Bub eyes Marie intently.)

STEEL—"Bring this young man a piece of pie, Marie."

MARIE—"Very well, sir. (Marie exits. Bub

watches her until the door closes.)

BUB—"Say, Mr. Steel, who's de dame?"

STEEL—"The who?"

BUB—"De dame, de goil (he points his finger over his shoulder in direction taken by Marie in leaving the room.)

STEEL—"Oh! you mean Marie?"

BUB—"Dat's de name; what is she, the chief cook?"

STEEL—(Laughing.) "No; she is the maid, son."

BUB—"Say, yer couldn't interduce a feller, could yer?"

STEEL—"Sure thing. (Marie enters with wedge of pie and lays same on table in front of Bub. Bub looks from pie to Marie, from Marie to pie. Marie exits. Bub watches her.)

NELL—"Don't wait for us, Bub; eat your pie. (Bub takes pie in hand and takes huge bite.)

BUB—"Say, Mr. Steel, yer smoke de weed, don't yer?"

STEEL—"Why, yes.

BUB—"Well save de snipes for me, will yer?"

STEEL and NELL—(In surprise) "You don't smoke them?"

BUB—(Taking another bite of pie) "Naw; yer see I got a couple of kids gaddinger dem up fer me in de Cosmeropolitan Building. I pay dem two cents a pound fer dem, den when I get twenty-five or fifty pounds I take dem to a chewing terbaccery over in Brooklyn and get five cents a pound fer dem. I'm going ter form de American Snipe Trust one of dese days, den Sockerfeller and Borgan, and all de rest of de dollar sign guys will want ter associate wid me."

STEEL—"You sure are all right, Bub. You can just bet I'll save them for you."

BUB—(Taking last bite of pie and arising from table.) "De pie was fine, Mrs. Steel, t'anks. I got to be getting home now, because when I'm late for supper me mudder always t'inks I've been playing billiards wid de boss, and she's dead against me keeping fast company. (Marie enters with tray; Bub watches her. Brushes some imaginary dust from his shoulder.)

MARIE—"Will I serve the roast now, sir?"

STEEL—"Show Bub out first, Marie. (Bub walks to Nell. Shakes her hand.)

BUB—"I'm glad ter have met yer, Mrs. Steel, and t'anks again fer de pie."

NELL—"You're welcome, Bub; you must come and see us again."

STEEL—"Good night, son."

BUB—"Good night, Mr. Steel. Don't forget ter save dem."

STEEL—(Steel and Nell laughing.) "All right, I won't, Bub. (Marie and Bub exit.)

STEEL—"That boy will make his mark some day; he's as bright as a new dollar."

NELL—"Rather crude, but I like to hear him talk."

STEEL—"The poor little chap has had a hard time of it I guess. (Marie enters; removes soup plates.)

STEEL—"Never mind the roast, Marie, unless Mrs. Steel will have some. I am leaving for the west tonight, and I'll get a bite to eat at the depot."

NELL—"I'm not a bit hungry."

MARIE—"Very well, sir. (Exits with soup plates.)

STEEL—"I'm sorry, Nell, but I won't be able to go to the Calder affair tonight. Mr. Morgan

just sent me word instructing me to leave for the west on the 10:40 tonight. They are having some trouble with the spans on that Akatoon bridge and I must go out there and straighten things out.

NELL—"Do you expect me to go without you?

STEEL—"No, I'll call up Jack Montgomery and have him call for you. He is not taking anyone, so he told me this morning.

NELL—"Business, business, business! I guess you think more of your darn old business than you do of me. I am only a secondary consideration anyway.

STEEL—"It's not for business or for any other purpose that I am working; just for you, Nell. You know business must come before pleasure, girlie. But never mind; maybe in a little while I'll be able to get in the engineering game for myself; then it will be some other Nell's husband who will have to put business before pleasure.

NELL—"Well, let us hope so.

STEEL—"I have a little good news for you, girlie.

NELL—"What is it? A raise in salary?

STEEL—"No, but I made a little investment today.

NELL—(Elated and surprised.) "You finally took my advice and are going outside your line?"

STEEL—"No, not quite that; but a friend of mine, a broker in Wall street, let me in on a good thing he is going to spring in a day or so and, if everything goes right, I had ought to have a bank balance by the end of the week of a couple of hundred thousand or so.

NELL—(Arising from table.) "Two hundred thousand dollars! (pause--smiling.) John! (She goes to him and sits on his knee.) You'll get me an electric, won't you, dear? (Steel shakes his head, yes. She puts her arm about his neck and kisses him.) You are a dear. I know you try. You know I love you, John. You're the best hubby in the world.

STEEL—"Come, dearie (they arise); you go and dress. I want to see you in that new gown of yours before I leave, and I'll call up Jack. (They start for door, at door they stop, turn half way facing the front of stage, he puts his arm about her and kisses her) saying:

STEEL—"Next week this time you can order all the gowns you want.

(Curtain.)

Act III.

SCENE ONE

[Two days later.]
Steel's room, National Hotel, Akatoon, Iowa. Steel is seated at table writing, [Knock at door. Steel sits up in chair.]

STEEL—"Come! (Enter bell-boy, hands Steel telegram) saying:

BELL-BOY—"This came after you had went out this morning and the clerk forgot to give it to you when you came in this evening, sir.

STEEL—(Hands boy some change.) "All right, son, thanks; here, buy yourself a Ford.

BELL-BOY—(Laughing, and taking money.)

"Thank you, sir; anything else?

STEEL—"That's all, son. (Boy exits.)

STEEL—(Opens telegram and reads aloud.):

"John Steel,
Care of National Hotel,
Akatoon, Iowa.
Open show on floor this A.M., and bound to win.
(Signed) Jack."

New York, 8:30 A.M.

STEEL—(Dropping telegram on table.) "By George, Jack's a brick, to let me know how things are going. (Smiling.) Won't Nell be tickled when I come home Saturday and lay a check on the table for a couple of hundred thousand or so? I'll have to get her that electric and put a few thousand to her credit in the bank; the rest I'll use to get in this game for myself with. I'm getting tired of working my life away for Morgan. (Telephone rings. He arises and answers.)

STEEL—"Hello!

...Pause...

"Yes, this is John Steel.

...Pause...

"You say New York wants me?

...Pause...

"All right; you'll call?

...Pause...

"Thanks, Central.

" (Hangs receiver to hook, walks back to chair and sits down, picks up telegram and reads it again (to himself) lays telegram back on table, sits back in chair smiling.) "Well, Nell will sure have some new gowns now. It's a shame, poor girl, the way she has to stint and scrape when all her friends have plenty. I'm sure she'll get over these foolish social aspirations of hers. I guess I'm partly to blame for letting this old work of mine hold me in too tight a grasp and not spending enough time with her. Well, after I once get started in this game for myself things will be different. I'll bet that's Morgan on the wire. They're having trouble with that Buffalo job, and he wants me to stop over on my way back east. (Phone rings. He arises and answers.)

STEEL—"Hello!

...Pause...

"Yes, John talking.

...Pause...

"Oh! Jack! (Elated and smiling.) I just received your wire. Been out all day. Mighty good of you to let me know how things were going, old man.

...Pause...

"You say everything went all right?
(Smiling.)

...Pause...

"(Sobering.) You say they didn't go right?

...Pause...

"(Getting excited.) "Talk louder, I can't hear you.

...Pause...

"You were sold out by the big fellows?

...Pause...

"Everything went to smash?

...Pause...

"(Becoming greatly excited.) "You're broke! Cleaned?

...Pause...

"You'd advise me to leave the country?

...Pause...

"They have discovered the loss of the securities? (He drawls this sentence.)

(He casts eyes about room, throws receiver to hook with bang, throws hand to head, half walks,

ACT III.—SCENE TWO

half staggers to chair at table, stares off into space; drops into chair.) "A thief! an embezzler! (half whisper.) My God! My God! A thief for the sake of high society; so she could have six hundred dollar gowns, and diamonds, and ride around in motor cars with the elite. What a pawn! what a weakling! (He arises from chair, half staggers across room to dresser, takes brandy flask and tumbler from dresser, fills tumbler half full of whiskey, gulps it down, stares at floor, returns flask and tumbler to dresser, leans against dresser, runs hand through hair, raises eyes from floor, stares off into space.) "A pile outside your line, eh? Her friends, our friends! I wonder what her friends, the Jones' and the Calder's, and all the rest will say now, when they find out her husband is a thief. (The liquor starts working on him; he laughs.) I wonder if after I'm up at Sing Sing, with a number instead of a name, wearing my heart out in a prison cell, dressed in a felon's suit of gray instead of evening clothes, if her friends will invite her to their affairs then; if she'll lose only sixty at 'bridge' in an afternoon, and give box and tea parties for their guests costing a hundred and twenty dollars. I'll bet she will (pause) like hell! (He shakes his head.) What a fool, what a fool! Damn her! Damn them all! (Short pause.) Montgomery advises me to leave the country. Mighty good advice. Let her face it; she's to blame, not me. I wonder what's the next train for Frisco. (He walks to bed, picks up bag from floor.) I've got a time table here; I'll look it up. (Places bag on bed, opens it, puts hand in bag, fumbles in bag for few seconds, smiles, and pulls revolver from bag, looks down at it in hand, saying) I'll take Jack's advice—I'll leave the country. Sing Sing, eh! (he laughs.) If I'm going to hell I'll go my own route and without irons on my wrists. (He raises gun to temple; directly opposite him is a large dressing mirror; he sees his reflection in mirror, stares at reflection for few seconds, pulls gun away from head, throws it back in the bag, saying) John Steel, you may be adjudged a thief in the eyes of society, but they will never be able to say John Steel was a coward! (He walks to table, sits on edge of table.) Let me see. It wasn't all her fault; she was the weaker, I the stronger. I saw it all coming. I should have insisted instead of begged, and had let her cry a bit; she'll cry worse now I suppose. Oh! how happy we were out on Long Island! (Orchestra starts playing 'Then You'll Remember Me' very softly. Steel sits down in chair, stares out into space.) How she'd meet me every night at the train, and on our way up to the house tell me all about how many eggs the chickens laid that day, and how many apples she had picked; and then after supper how she'd play and sing for me, 'You'll Remember Me' and 'Sweet Genevieve.' Oh! those were such happy days. Why did they have to go? (He throws out both hands.) Nell, Nell! I loved you so! (He drops head on arms, rests arms on table for few seconds; raises head.) By God! I'll go back and face it! I'll willingly pay the price if it will only bring my Nell back again. I'll go where they send me; come back and start anew. (He arises, walks to bed, starts packing toilet articles on dresser in bag, saying) John Steel, this is to be your lesson. (Clasps hands in front of face.) Pray God it may be her's!

.(Curtain descends very slowly.)

Private Office of James C. Morgan, Morgan Engineering Co., Broadway, New York City.
Morgan and Thomas, the firm's cashier, are seated at Morgan's desk, talking over the loss of the securities.

MORGAN—"How did you come to miss them, Thomas?

THOMAS—"Well, you see, sir, upon arriving at the office yesterday, the first thing I did was to go to the vault to check them up as they are due to be posted this coming Monday. Upon the completion of the count I found them to be twenty thousand short. I counted them three times, sir, before reporting the loss to you.

MORGAN—"Yes, but how did you come to suspect Steel?

THOMAS—"Thursday morning Montgomery was here to see Steel. Just after Montgomery left Steel sent Bub to me to find out what those securities were to be used for. That afternoon Miss Jefferson, the telephone girl, asked me if Mr. Steel was a wealthy man. I asked what were her reasons in wanting to know. She replied by saying she had overheard a conversation over the phone between Steel and Montgomery wherein Steel had agreed to come into some proposition that Montgomery was going to put over in the Street, his (Steel's) share to be twenty thousand dollars. I reprimanded her and told her in the future to repeat no more conversations she hears over the wire. Of course I thought nothing of her remark at the time, but upon missing the securities and then reading in the papers of Montgomery's failure in the Street through that Amalgamated deal, her remarks came back to me like a flash, and upon putting two and two together I came to the conclusion Steel was the man.

MORGAN—"Very good, Thomas. Steel will be up here any minute. He is due on that 9:30 from the west. At least, he wired me from Chicago last night to this effect. (Bub, who has been cleaning the windows unnoticed up to this time, jumps down from window ledge and walks over and confronts Thomas.)

BUB—(To Thomas) "Did I hear yer say dat Mr. Steel stole somet'ing? Well, if yer did yer a liar, and if Mr. Steel heard yer say it he'd punch yer face. Mr. Steel's a gentleman and yer a great big stiff, do yer get me?"

MORGAN—(Aghast.) "You leave this office this moment you young scallawag; you are discharged!"

BUB—"Scallerbag, eh? Well, let me tell yer, yer old skinflint, I wouldn't work fer yer anudder minute; but I oughter ter pull yer whiskers just once before I go so you'd be sure ter remember me; but being the only support me mudder's got I am afraid ter do it, because if I did, yer so mean and ornery I am afraid I'd get de disease myself and get just as mean and ornery as you are, see! den my mudder would have ter work ter pay de doctor ter cure me. But I'll tell yer dis, I'm soertainly going ter let yer missus know about de dame yer keeping on 72nd street. Good-by! (He exits, slamming the door.)

MORGAN—"The impertinence! I don't know what our younger generation is coming to.

THOMAS—(Smiling behind his hand.) "Don't mind a little thing like that, Mr. Morgan."

MORGAN—"Oh, I don't mind it, but it gets on my nerves. As I was saying, Steel will be back here this morning. District Attorney Rittman has

promised to be up here at nine-thirty. I called him up last night after I had received the wire from Steel. There is not a doubt but what our testimony before the grand jury yesterday will be weighty enough to indict him. (Telephone on Morgan's desk rings, he answers.)

MORGAN—“Hello!

“ Pause
“ ‘Yes, him talking.
“ Pause
“ ‘You say he has arrived?
“ Pause
“ ‘His wife met him?
“ Pause
“ ‘See that he comes up here at once.
“ Pause
“ ‘All right, officer, good-by.

“ (Hangs up receiver.) “That was a detective from headquarters they had watching the trains. He arrived; his wife met him—she always does when he comes back from a trip. I suppose there will be a scene, but it can't be helped. (Knock at door.)

MORGAN—“Come! (Enter Robert Henshaw.) (Morgan, arising) “How are you, Henshaw? (They shake hands.) Have a chair. (Henshaw sits down.) This is Mr. Thomas, our cashier, Mr. Henshaw.

HENSHAW—“How are you?

THOMAS—“Glad to know you, sir.

HENSHAW—“Steel's in trouble, Morgan. (Pulling out check-book and opening it.)

MORGAN—“How did you know?

HENSHAW—“Tuesday evening I attended the Calder affair. Young Montgomery was there also. He got pretty well in wine, got confidential with me and told me how he had let John in on a sure thing he was going to put over in the Street in a day or so. Tuesday morning John called me up at my home and asked for the loan of twenty thousand and for a few days. Upon asking him what he wanted to use it for, he told me that a friend of his in the Street was letting him in on something good. Me being against any Wall street manipulations, I refused him the money. Yesterday I saw in the papers the account of the loss of the securities from your vault, and also saw the failure of the Montgomery coup. I thought nothing of it at the time I read it, but upon reading the paper this morning and noticing your statement that one of your most trusted employees was suspected by you, I naturally figured John had his finger in the wrong pie.

MORGAN—“Yes, a bright boy; wonderful capabilities, and with such a bright and promising future.

HENSHAW—(Poises pencil over open check-book.) “I'm here to settle, Morgan. How much?

MORGAN—(Sitting down.) “It's not so much the money as it is the principle with me, Henshaw.

HENSHAW—“No, I suppose not.

MORGAN—“You know you read every day of some trusty employee betraying the confidence of his employer. The victim is got to by the relatives or friends of the guilty one, with that idle talk of ‘What if it were your son or brother?’ The victim's sympathies are played upon to such an extent that in nine cases out of ten off the culprit goes scot free. If I had a son or brother and they were

to get in like that I would use every power at my command to see that the law was carried out to the letter, and off they would go to the penitentiary or reformatory.

HENSHAW—“Yes, if you had a son or a brother and they were to get in like that, God alone could help them. You are so egotistical in your own purity you never stop for a moment to think of the men who have lost their lives on some of your jobs, and you in return for their life have sent their wives a letter of condolence and a check for a hundred or two to appease their sorrow-torn hearts so they wouldn't sue you. This was legitimate business, I suppose? You never stop to think of the bum bridges you have put up where Steel's specifications have called for three sacks of cement to every so many feet, but you, through your own orders to your men, have in reality only used two, and that of an inferior grade, thereby placing thousands of lives in jeopardy year in and year out. This, also, was legitimate business, I suppose? Why didn't you pay John Steel what he was honestly and truthfully worth to you? You know and I know that it has been that boy's brains and technique that have landed the big jobs for you, putting hundreds of thousands of dollars in your pockets. If you had paid him what he was honestly worth this firm would have been Morgan & Steel since the day he landed the Binger Building contract for you. And now you want to send him to the penitentiary, make of him a social outcast, and upon his release brand him as an ex-convict. These sentiments are the teachings of your church in which you are such a pious worker, I suppose. I know you and your kind, James Morgan; you are all on the topmost rung of the ladder of deceit and hypocrisy. Are you going to let me settle this or no?

MORGAN—“John Steel goes to the penitentiary just as sure as my name is James C. Morgan. There is the door (points finger to door); I bid you good morning! (Henshaw arises from chair. A knock at door; Morgan arises and walks to door and opens it. Standing at door is Steel, Nell, District Attorney Rittman and officer.)

MORGAN—“Come in, gentlemen; bring the prisoner with you. (They enter. Henshaw walks to Steel and shakes his hand.)

HENSHAW—“How are you, my boy?

STEEL—“Not very well.

NELL—“Hello, Uncle Bob, you here? (They all sit down, upon an invitation from Morgan to be seated. Steel and Nell sit down on couch.)

STEEL—(With half smile.) “I see you are all here at my funeral.

NELL—“Who did Mr. Morgan mean by the prisoner, dear?

MORGAN—“Sorry to have to tell you, Mrs. Steel, but I meant your husband. He is a common thief!

NELL—(Laughing uneasily.) “Don't fool me that way, Mr. Morgan, please.

MORGAN—“I'm not fooling, Mrs. Steel; I'm deadly in earnest when I tell you my most trusted employee, your husband, has robbed me of twenty thousand dollars. Ask him! (He points to Steel.)

NELL—(Becoming alarmed, looking at Steel) “My God! John, what have you done?

STEEL—(Gazing at floor and speaking very softly) “I guess he's right, dear; I'm a thief. (Nell looks from one to another in amazement.)

MORGAN—“You know, Steel, I have often tried to figure out how you could live the way you do,

and travel in the set you do, and your wife wear the most expensive gowns she can buy—I know of this through having found this bill in your desk yesterday when we searched it (he takes bill from desk and waves it at Steel.) —and your wife entertain the way she does, all on eight thousand a year.

NELL—(Sobbing.) “My God! it’s me! I see, I understand; it’s my fault. My God!

NELL—(To Morgan.) “This is all my fault, Mr. Morgan. If John did anything wrong, he did it for my sake. I drove him to it with my crazy notion of a social career. I see it all now. (She drops her face in her hands, shaking with sobs.)

STEEL—(Arising, places his hand on Nell’s shoulder.) “My wife had nothing to do with this matter. It is me who is guilty, and me alone, and I don’t intend to have her name brought into it by you, James Morgan, if I have to pull your tongue out with my naked hands! (Points finger at Morgan.)

RITTMAN—“Admit nothing, Mr. Steel. I am D. A. Rittman, the district attorney.

STEEL—“I have nothing to withhold, sir. I soared to too high a level and lost, that is all. I took those securities and converted them into cash to use as my share in the Montgomery coup. I intended to put them back today, but you all know too well the results of my investment, as thousands of men before and thousands after me, I suppose. Wall street gold called me, I answered the call (heaving a long sigh and looking down at Nell) to my sorrow. I am ready for the sequel, gentlemen. (He sits down and tries to comfort Nell.)

MORGAN—“I think about five years up the river will be the thing, Rittman.

NELL—(Arising and falling on her knees in front of Morgan.) “My God! Mr. Morgan, not that, not prison! I tell you it’s my fault, not his; not that! Oh, don’t send him to prison! (Her head drops in her hands, sobbing.)

STEEL—(Arises, assists her back to the couch.) “Come, dear, you are excited; calm yourself. (He tries to soothe her.)

RITTMAN—“Since your appearance before the grand jury yesterday, Mr. Morgan, I have done considerable investigating relative to Mr. Steel, and through the same I think you could well afford to show some clemency to Mr. Steel after all he has done for you in a business way. Of course I am the people’s lawyer, placed in my office by the people for the purpose of serving them. This I have faithfully striven to do since the incumbency was placed upon me. But Mr. Steel is also one of those who have sworn to serve. Of course he, through his own admission, has committed an act that the laws which govern society have emphatically stated is a felonious act, thereby leaving himself liable to the penalty as prescribed by law.

“So many people are under the impression that the present day district attorney should be a Victor Hugo’s Javert alone; but I want to say that a portion of the Bishop and the candle-sticks should be in his make-up also. When a case proves meritorious, the parole or suspended sentence law should be exercised, and in this case I would recommend it freely. Of course if you insist upon penal servitude my hands are tied; but this I want understood, that you or no other man, Morgan, can dictate as to the length of the sentence to be imposed upon a man at the justice bar.

I want further to state if it were entirely in my hands, the sentence to be imposed in this case would not be a day.

MORGAN—“He goes up the river if it costs me twenty thousand more. (He bangs his fist on his desk.)

HENSHAW—(Shaking his finger at Morgan.) “You’re a heartless cur, Morgan! Let me tell you, I’ll have some of your dealings investigated in the near future, then possibly you may get a taste of the same medicine you are about to have administered to that boy. (He points to Steel.)

RITTMAN—(Arises and walks to Steel. Steel gazes at floor. Rittman lays his hand on Steel’s shoulder, looking down at him.) “Mr. Steel, I really feel sorry for you. (Nell starts to sob again.) Many a sad case comes before me in my official capacity. If it were not for those involved in one side of the case, as in this one, I could make of my office what every other district attorney’s office ought to be throughout our land—not a medium for the people to use for the satisfying of their vengeance, but an emissary for good, of doing good where it ought to be done. But this I can offer you—I am sorry to say the grand jury indicted you yesterday—if you will accept a plea of guilt I personally will see that the sentence imposed will not exceed a year. (There is a short pause.)

MORGAN—“A year for twenty thousand?

RITTMAN—“No; a promising young man’s career blighted by the stigma of penal servitude; a young wife’s heart broken; a fine young married couple’s happiness shattered—all for the sake of mere dollars, Morgan. (Steel slowly raises his eyes to Rittman, arises, looks down at Nell.)

STEEL—“I accept your offer, sir, and thank you.

RITTMAN—“I am only sorry I am unable to give you your liberty, my boy. (Rittman walks to Morgan; they stand talking. Henshaw arises; Steel walks to him, takes his hand.)

STEEL—“Good-by Uncle Bob; take care of Nell while I’m gone, will you? For my father’s sake.

HENSHAW—“You bet I will, my boy, and I’ll also take care of that thing! (He points to Morgan, he wipes his eyes with handkerchief.) Good-by, my boy, and God bless you! (Steel turns and walks to Nell who has risen from couch; he takes her in his arms.)

STEEL—“Dear heart, a year is only a short time. You have been wrong and I have been wrong with you; this is to be our lesson. Be brave, little girl, and live and hope, and thank God for the future. Kiss me. (She raises her tear-stained face, he kisses her.) Good-by, my Nell, good-by. (He leaves her and walks to officer and Rittman who are talking. Nell stands staring after him, in a daze.)

STEEL—“I’m ready, gentlemen. (They start for door.)

NELL—(Sobbing.) “John! Oh John! come back, John! Don’t go, John; it’s my place to go. I made you do it. (At door Steel hesitates for second, squares his shoulders, walks through door, officer and Rittman following.)

NELL—(Throwing out arms.) “John! Oh, come back, John! John, oh John! (She turns to Henshaw, falls in his arms, sobbing) Uncle Bob! Uncle Bob!”

(Curtain descends very slowly.)

Act IV.

[Time, ten months later.] Sitting room in the Henshaw home, 158th street, New York City. Ten months has elapsed since Steel went to prison. With the two months allowed for good conduct on a one year sentence Steel's term expires today. Nell and Marie, the maid, are arranging flowers about the room in preparation for his homecoming. Henshaw, true to his promise to Steel, has had Nell living at his home since Steel went away.

NELL—"I should have liked to have gone to the depot to meet him, but Uncle Bob said he would go, and that I had better stay home and get the house in readiness for his homecoming. Say, won't I have a lot to tell him though, Marie? All about how Uncle Bob had that detective investigate that bridge Morgan was putting up out in Ohio, and how the detective found out that he was using old steel instead of new, as called for in the contract; and how, when Uncle Bob went out to Cleveland and met Morgan at his hotel, and told him of his findings, how old Morgan stormed and raged and cursed. But then Uncle Bob told him he had made a solemn vow at the time he sent John to the penitentiary to either put him out of business or in the same place he had put John, and that now that he had the necessary evidence he, Morgan, could do one or the other—give up business or stand trial for misrepresentation. Then when Uncle Bob went to the telephone to call an officer, Morgan realized there was no bluff to it; he fell on his knees and begged Uncle Bob not to call the officer; that he would willingly give up business or do anything Uncle Bob said if he would just promise not to expose him. Well, he gave up business and Uncle Bob was satisfied. We have never let John know a thing about the whole affair, because we knew if he should find out he would have stopped Uncle Bob from doing what he did, and Uncle Bob was determined that Morgan should get a taste of his own medicine.

MARIE—"Yes, but it's too bad, Mrs. Steel, that Mr. Henshaw didn't send him to prison the way he did Mr. Steel.

NELL—"No, Marie; I wouldn't wish anyone that. (Glancing at mantle clock.) Good Lord! it's eleven o'clock, Marie, and they are liable to be here any moment. Go get the table set for lunch right away.

MARIE—"I forgot all about it. I'll go at once. (She exits. Nell arranges some flowers in vase on the center table, humming 'Then You'll Remember Me.' The portières at the door move apart; in the doorway is Steel and Henshaw. Nell looks up and sees them; she runs to Steel, saying)

NELL—"John! (They embrace and kiss.)

STEEL—"Nell!

HENSHAW—(Smiling.) "I'll leave you two kids now; I must go and clean up. (He exits, saying) All is well that ends well. (Nell and Steel, arm in arm, walk to chairs in front of grate fire and sit down.)

NELL—"How have you been, John? (with a catch in her voice.) You look so white.

STEEL—"All right; and you, Nell?

NELL—"Fine; and Uncle Bob has been so good. He never will forgive himself for refusing you the money.

STEEL—"Yes, I know; he's a brick, but he don't want to feel that way. He has done nothing to forgive.

NELL—"God! John, it must have been terrible at first?

STEEL—"Let us think of the past ten months as a bad dream and forget it, Nell.

NELL—"Yes, if I only could; but I can never forget that it was me at fault, and not you, and through my false notions of life what I drove you to. Why, John, when you first went away I thought I would die. At night in my dreams I thought I could see you in your cell looking out of the bars, pointing your finger at me, and crying 'See what you have done!' I tell you, I thought I would go mad. I felt I could never look you in the face again without a knife thrusting me in the breast. How you pleaded, how you reasoned, how you begged, all to no end. Oh, if I could only stand on the housetops and proclaim myself to all wives, to heed, to beware of the social longings and aspirations, so the sequel to their wrong perspectives may not be as mine has been. Oh! if I only could.

STEEL—"Yes, Nell, if more husbands throughout the world would see that their incomes were not abused and lived outside of by their wives and children; if they would not heed the term 'tight-fist' and 'tight-wad' so readily, there would be far fewer men in the prisons for embezzlement and larceny; there would be far fewer aged couples stinting and scraping to live in their last days throughout the world. Lots and lots of suffering would be avoided if they only knew what I know now.

NELL—"Yes, you are right, John, but I'll not have you blame yourself.

STEEL—"Never mind, it's all over now, that terrible nightmare. All we have to think of now is the future. Uncle Bob and I are going in the engineering game. He has made all the necessary arrangements to this end, even down to the renting of the office; and listen, girlie, we are going back to Long Island; back to our little home; back to the chickens and the grapes and apples; back to nature and the good and true things of life; back to God, Nell, where he intended us to be; back where, at every step you take, at every breath you breathe, you are not reminded of the kick and tear and claw of humanity in their mad and eager struggles to possess the mighty god, Mammon.

NELL—"I wish to God I had listened to you and stayed when we were there four years ago, John.

STEEL—"What became of Bub, Nell?

NELL—"He's working for a brokerage firm down town. He's been to see me every week since you were gone; always came, so he said, to find out when you would be home. He's going to night school now; says he's studying so he can be an engineer like Mr. Steel some day.

STEEL—(Smiling.) "He's a fine little chap. I must get in touch with him. I would no more think of opening an office without having him in it than I would fly. Some day I hope to be able to send him to college. He has a wonderful mind; it certainly should have the chance to develop. (Marie enters.)

STEEL—(Upon seeing Marie, arises and walks to her and shakes hands.) "Glad to see you, Marie.

MARIE—"I'm glad to see you, Mr. Steel. Welcome home, sir! Lunch is ready.

NELL—"All right; we'll be in in a minute. (Marie exits. Nell arises; walks to Steel.)

STEEL— (Putting his arm about her.) “Girlie, that past ten months is forgotten from this moment on. It's the new life now, the real life—life as it should be lived. As I told you the day I left you, you were wrong, but I was wrong with you. From now on it's a life for one another—your pains to be my pains, your sorrows my sorrows. We both have realized our deficiencies and mistakes; let us mould the future upon the lesson our realization taught.

After lunch I want you to sing ‘Then You'll Remember Me.’ (The orchestra starts to play very softly, ‘Then You'll Remember Me.’ Steel kisses her, saying) You know, dear heart, it's a long road that has no turning!” (He has one arm about her, her head is resting on his breast, with his other hand he is smoothing her hair.)

(Curtain descends very slowly.)



...Finis...



0 017 400 069 4





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 017 400 069 4